WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

Routine Care

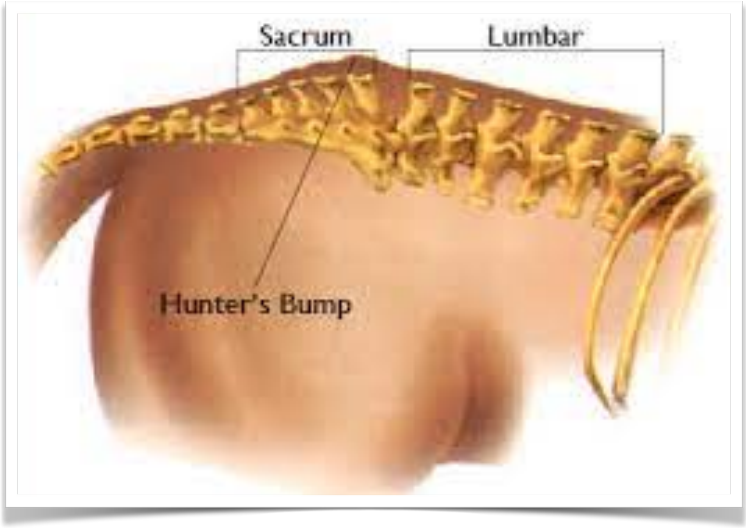
Worm Egg Count Scheme

Now is the perfect time to join our very popular Targeted Worming Scheme. This provides a minimum of 4 faecal worm egg counts per year and an Equisal tapeworm test, as well as 10% off wormers and unlimited worming advice and discussion. Please call our office if you would like to sign up or know more.

By regularly conducting worm egg counts, you help to keep your horse's worms managed and protect worming products against resistance for future generations of horses.

Equine Dentistry

Routine dental care is essential to a happy and healthy horse. Sharp or imbalanced teeth can interfere with eating and exercise, causing welfare issues. As prey animals, horses are excellent at hiding pain, particularly dental pain, so without regular check ups dental disease can go unnoticed. Reasons to book a dental examination include:



Sacroilliac (SI) Disease

The Anatomy

The sacroiliac (SI) joint is a complicated region at the junction of two major bones: the ilium (part of the pelvis) and the sacrum (part of the spinal column). It differs from other joints within the horse, as very little movement occurs here and it is very stable. There is only a small amount of joint fluid within the joint space and the cartilage within the SI joint is not the same as that found within other higher motion joints, such as the fetlock. Three sets of ligaments support the SI region by providing resistance against the weight bearing force of the horse.

- Ridden issues
- Problems eating
- Dropping food (quidding)
- Finding chewed pieces of food
- Nasal discharge
- Swelling on head/face

Health Checks

We are always happy to do a health check including listening to your horse's heart and lungs, and examining their eyes. This is something we would recommend as an annual check up, especially for elderly horses.

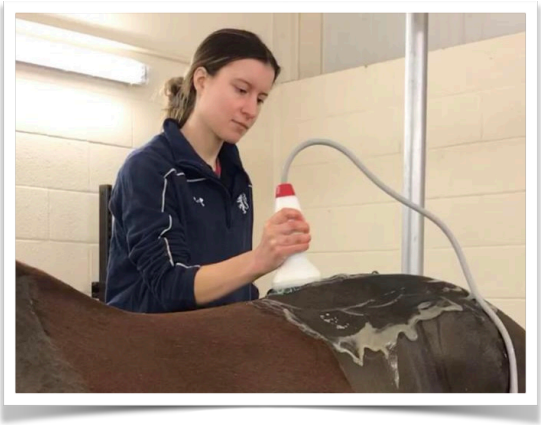
Sacroiliac Disease

Sacroiliac disease is a broad term used to describe any inflammatory process within the region, such as osteoarthritis or muscular or connective tissue injury. Because the sacroiliac area is so difficult to palpate, visualise or image, being deep within the horse, pain in the SI region is usually referred to under the broad category of sacroiliac disease.

Clinical Signs

- Lameness
- Nonspecific or subtle poor performance
- Problems in canter e.g. kicking out, frequently becoming disunited, shortened hindlimb stride, "bunny-hopping"
- Falling back into trot from canter, or struggling to strike off
- Himdlimb stiffness
- Dragging hind toes
- Resenting touching or grooming of the SI area

Diagnosis



Diagnosis of SI disease can be complex, as exclusion of other causes of hindlimb lameness/signs, is needed. Unlike with other joints of the leg, nerve blocking can be incredibly difficult and is not without serious risk, as a large nerve essential for weight bearing runs near the region and can be affected by local anaesthetic, meaning the horse cannot stand until the block has worn off. Because of this, the block is very rarely performed, and instead a number of factors including back examination, clinical signs seen and sometimes ultrasound scanning or response to treatment are considered to make a diagnosis. Diagnosis methods can vary from practice to practice, but at Wensum Valley Vets we most often assess response to "shock-wave", a therapeutic tool which provides localised pain relief, after which signs may temporally resolve allowing diagnosis of the SI region as the source of the problem.

Treatment

Management of sacroiliac disease may involve a period of rest, followed by an exercise regime to strengthen the muscles supporting the area, this can include carrot stretches, flexing and extending the spine and exercises on the lunge. Steroid medication around the sacroiliac joint is also useful to reduce inflammation in the surrounding structures and provide pain relief. The effectiveness of this treatment and its longevity, vary between individual horses, so close monitoring in the months following are needed.